Montgomery County Sentinel
News: Of And For Women
A12
Thursday, April 15, 1965

Mathias Kids Make Way for Ducklings

By Jane Day

Charlie and Robbie Mathias are learning what life is all about, beginning with the egg.

The young sons of Sixth District Rep. Charles "Mac" Mathias and Mrs. Mathias are in the duck-raising business up to their chubby little chins.

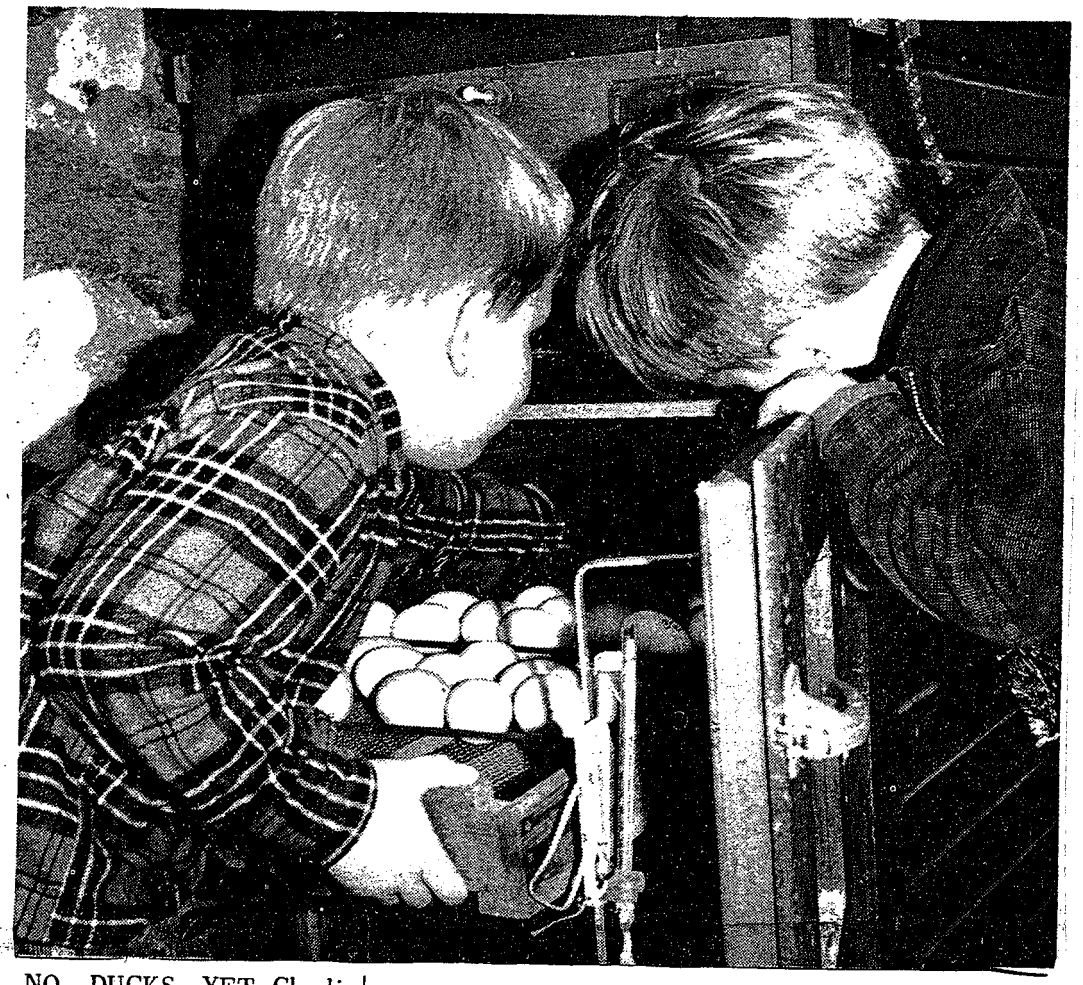
And the fact that there may not be any little ducklings by Easter is no cause for dismay. They're too busy watching the ducks grow—in the egg.

The boys have an incubator full of duck eggs they've collected and a small candler. Each day they check on the progress of things within the shell by holding the egg up to the candler--a small cylinder with a strong light inside--to see the growing embryo.

For days they've watched the dark spot in the yolk grow bigger, the spidery pattern of veins develop, and eventually, the bones and bill of the embryo duck take shape.

"The first time Charlie saw the heart pulsating, he was so excited, he could hardly stand it," Mrs. Mathias related the other day.

The domestic pet population on the Mathias' Frederick farm is undergoing a seasonal boom. Not long ago young Charlie, now 5 and a half, was on hand when the family Chesapeake Retriever produced a litter of



NO DUCKS YET--Charlie Mathias, 5, checks the incubator in his cellar every day hopefully waiting for the appearance of ducklings. Brother Robbie, 4, peers over the door. Both youngsters, sons of Rep. Charles "Mac" Mathias and Mrs. Mathias, use an old-fashioned candler to watch the ducks develop inside the shell. Sentinel photos by Carolyn Salisbury.

pups.

Delighted with the performance he asked the inevitable question: how did they get in there in the first place?

And so began the story of fertilized eggs and growing cells.

To give the boys a clearer understanding of this development, Mrs. Mathias called on a helpful neighbor, borrowed an incubator and got a start with some hybrid mallards--Canard de Rouen--of French origin. Their distinguishing feature is a saucy gallic pompom on their heads.

Charlie and brother Robbie, 3-1/2, are up every morning to collect eggs from the duck pen. They was them and their mother dates them. Then into the incubator they go.

The boys turn over the eggs on the incubator trays twice each day. Their mother sees that the timperature remains at 99 or 100 degrees and that water is kept inside for humidity control.

Before long, the boys will see a sticky little duckling emerge from a shell that once held a dark spot and a series of spreading veins.

Meanwhile, Charlie pursues his interest in growing things by helping his mother in the garden. And through her subtle guidance, he's learning how plants grow. He took great delight last week in showing a

CANARD DE ROUEN--This hybrid French strain raised by the Mathias children at their Frederick home resembles domestic mallards except for their topknots. Young Charlie cradles one of the ducks but brother Robbie gets a helping hand from his mother as his duck tries to escape.